

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2787

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 735

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IZ

SUBJ: RESURFACING OF SYRIAN-IRAQI DISCORD

1. IN SPEECH AT DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY COMMEMORATING NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF FEB 23, 1966 COUP WHICH OVERTHREW CIVILIAN BATTH GOVERNMENT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD HAYDAR MADE SEVERAL DEROGATORY REFERENCES TO IRAQI BAATH MOVEMENT AND GOVERNMENT. AFTER BRANDING IRAQIS AS SEPARATISTS PREVENTING UNITY OF BAATH REVOLUTION, HAYDAR DISPARAGED IRAQI SUPPORT IN OCTOBER 1973 WAR. IN FLOWERY ARABIC HYPERBOLE, HE CHARGED THAT GOI HAD SENT TROOPS ONLY IN RESPONSE TO POPULAR PRESSURE AND THAT THESE TROOPS HAD ABANDONED THE BATTLEFIELD WHEN THEY IMAGINED THAT DAMASCUS WAS BEING BESEIGED. THIS WAS ACT OF FEAR, HE ASSERTED, FROM PERSONS WHO HAD DEVIATED FROM PARTY'S TRUE COURSE.

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2. WE UNDERSTAND FROM LOCAL SOURCES THAT HAYDAR'S REMARKS WERE MEANT AS REPLY TO RECENT IRAQI STATEMENTS AGAINST SYRIA, SPECIFICALLY INDIRECT REFERENCES BY SADDAM HUSSEIN AND DIRECT ACCUSATIONS BY BAGHDAD PRESS THAT SYRIA WAS MEDDLING IN INTERNAL IRAQI AFFAIRS AND PROVIDING SUPPORT TO KURDS.

3. COMMENT. WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION HERE THAT IRAQIS INITIATED LATEST ROUND OF MUD SLINGING, BUT EVEN IF THEY DID, SYRIANS WERE QUICK TO RETURN FIRE. ALTHOUGH PRINCIPAL SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVE AT PRESENT IS TO PREACH AND PRESERVE ARAB UNITY, LONG STANDING FEUD WITH IRAWI BAATH FALLS IN DIFFERENT AND OFTEN OVERRIDING CATEGORY OF PARTY POLITICS.
MURPHY

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